

Serial No. 10/824,634
Docket No. P21-169760M/ISI

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AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS:

The attached sheets of drawings include new Figures 13 and 14. Figures 13 and 14 have been added to illustrate the support member 21, the lock hole 22, and the lid 23. No new matter has been added.

Attachments: New drawing sheets

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REMARKS

Claims 1-7 are all the claims presently pending in the application. Claims 1-6 have been merely editorially amended and have not been substantively amended to more particularly define the claimed invention.

Entry of this Amendment is believed proper since no new issues are being presented to the Examiner that would require further consideration and/or search.

Applicant specifically states that no amendment to any claim herein should be construed as a disclaimer of any interest in or right to an equivalent of any element or feature of the amended claim.

Applicant gratefully acknowledges the Examiner's indication that claim 7 is allowed and that claims 1-6 would be allowable if amended to overcome the Examiner's 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, rejection.

Claims 1-6 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite.

These rejections are respectfully traversed in the following discussion.

I. THE 35 U.S.C. 112, SECOND PARAGRAPH, REJECTION

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-6 under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. The Examiner, however, has clearly misunderstood the claimed invention.

As set forth in the Office Action, the Examiner suggested that claims 1 and 6 can be amended to recite an apparatus comprising "at least two interchangeable operating handles" and that "each of the left and right latches is provided with two contact surfaces engageable with a respective operating portion of the interchangeable operating handles".

However, the present invention produces an effect when at least one of the left and right latches is provided with two contact surfaces, and an operating portion of the operating handle is engageable with one of the two contact surfaces.

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As disclosed in the original specification, “[w]hen an operating handle 10B turned laterally from the left side to the right side is used for the left and right latches 1A, 1B” (e.g., see Specification at page 15, lines 21-23), “[w]hen a push type operating handle 10C is used for the left and right latches 1A, 1B” (e.g., see Specification at page 17, lines 14-15), and “[w]hen a slide type operating handle 10D is used for the left and right latches 1A, 1B” (e.g., see Specification at page 19, lines 15-16), the present invention can be applied to various situations.

In other words, when at least one of the latches (e.g., latch 1A; Applicant submits that exemplary reference numbers are merely provided for the aid of the Examiner and are not meant to limit the scope of the claimed invention in any manner) is provided with two contact surfaces (e.g., 7a and 8a) engageable with the respective operating portion (e.g., 16A) of the operating portion (e.g., 16A) of the operating handle, various directions in which the operating handles are moved and various systems for moving the operating handles are provided.

Furthermore, the Application points out that “when the common left and right latches 1A, 1B are used, the position in which the operating handle 10A, 10B, 10C, 10D is set can be changed freely even in a vehicle of the right steering wheel specifications and left steering wheel specifications, and even when the apparatus as a whole is not changed. The direction in which the apparatus is operated can also be changed freely by using a vertically turning type operating system and a laterally turning type operating system. The operating system can be changed freely as well to a turning type system, a push type system and a slide type system. Therefore, it becomes unnecessary that the design of the side lock apparatus can be changed each occasion” (see Application at page 23, lines 5-18).

Therefore, the feature of “each of the left and right latches is provided with two contact surfaces engageable with a respective operating portion of the interchangeable

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operating handles" (emphasis added by Applicant), suggested by the Examiner, is not necessary.

In view of the above, Applicant has amended claims 1 and 6 to recite, inter alia, "at least one of the left and right latches is provided with two contact surfaces, and an operating portion of the operating handle is engageable with one of the two contact surfaces" (emphasis added by Applicant).

Therefore, the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw this rejection.

II. FORMAL MATTERS AND CONCLUSION

In accordance with the Examiner's objections to the claims, Applicant has amended the claims in a manner fully responsive to the Examiner's objections.

With respect to the Examiner's objection to the drawings, Applicant has added new Figures 13 and 14, which illustrate the support member (e.g., 21), the lock hole (e.g., 22), the lid / opening and closing member (e.g., 23) and the shaft. Reference numbers 24, 25, 26 and 27 represent the fixing structure for the embodiments disclosed in Figure 6, Figure 4, Figure 8 and Figure 10, respectively.

Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw these objections.

In view of the foregoing, Applicant submits that claims 1-7, all the claims presently pending in the application, are patentably distinct over the prior art of record and are in condition for allowance. The Examiner is respectfully requested to pass the above application to issue at the earliest possible time.

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Should the Examiner find the application to be other than in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at the local telephone number listed below to discuss any other changes deemed necessary in a telephonic or personal interview.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any deficiency in fees or to credit any overpayment in fees to Attorney's Deposit Account No. 50-0481.

Respectfully Submitted,

Date: October 11, 2006



Scott M. Tulino, Esq.
Registration No. 48,317

Sean M. McGinn, Esq.
Registration No. 34,386

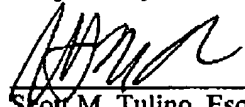
**MCGINN INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY
LAW GROUP, PLLC**
8321 Old Courthouse Road, Suite 200
Vienna, VA 22182-3817
(703) 761-4100
Customer No. 21254

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I hereby certify that I am filing this paper via facsimile, to Group Art Unit 3676, at (571) 273-8300, on October 11, 2006.

Respectfully Submitted,

Date: October 11, 2006



Scott M. Tulino, Esq.
Reg. No. 48,317

Sean M. McGinn, Esq.
Reg. No. 34,386